

June 25, 2024

Hon. Eric Adams
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

C.C
First Deputy Mayor Sheena Wright
Deputy Mayor Anne Williams-Isom
Deputy Mayor Ana Almanzar
Commissioner Manuel Castro
Budget Director Jacques Jiha

RE: IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDERS AND COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS URGE MAYOR ADAMS TO PROPERLY FUND IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES

Dear Mayor Adams,

Immigrant ARC is a coalition of over 80 member organizations providing legal services across the state of New York. Our mission is to increase access to justice and legal counsel for immigrant New Yorkers by mobilizing New York's legal service providers and addressing the systemic barriers to justice that immigrants face. Our members hold deep expertise in the complex experiences of New York immigrants navigating our country's immigration agencies.

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, members, and partners of Immigrant ARC (I-ARC), we urge your administration to meet the needs of the moment and properly fund immigration legal services in the FY25 City Budget and City agencies, like the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, to coordinate closely with New York City's legal service providers and community-based organizations as we address the legal needs of our immigrant communities. **We have outlined below our priorities and recommendations for the budget:**

- **Invest \$58 million for immigration legal services** to ensure that immigrants receive continuity of services and no one falls through the cracks of our complex and punitive immigration system. The breakdown of the funding goes to the following city-wide initiatives:
 - **\$31 million** for the Mayor's Immigrant Opportunities Initiative—funding that has been repeatedly threatened by budget cuts which puts at risk crucial programs like Action NYC and the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative.
 - **\$16.6 million** for the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP), a first-in-the-nation program that provides free immigration legal services to low-income New Yorkers.
 - **\$5.7 million** for ICARE, which provides representation to unaccompanied minors and families in removal proceedings.
 - **\$3.3 million** for CUNY Citizenship Now!, which provides free legal services to people on their path to citizenship.
 - **\$2.6 million** for the City Council's Immigrant Opportunities Initiative (IOI), which provides legal services to recently arrived immigrants to assist them in applications for citizenship or permanent residency.

- **Invest an additional \$50 million to support emergency immigration legal services** to meet the needs of the City's newest immigrant residents as recommended by the City Council.
- **Invest \$1 million in a pilot program** to provide immigration legal services clients with wraparound and holistic case management services. The pilot program would:
 - **Fill the social services gap** for immigrant communities seeking legal aid, including by allowing legal service providers to hire social workers to work with them on individual cases.
 - **Include case management and representation assistance** to help immigrant New Yorkers navigate housing supports, benefits, education, and health care systems.
- **Invest in organizations through multi-year contracts that streamline reporting** and administrative requirements so that organizations get paid timely and can focus their capacity on substantive work instead of contract management.
- **For immigration services, fund nonprofit legal services providers and community-based organizations**, which have greater experience, have stronger ties to the communities they serve, and have greater language capacity than for-profit corporations.
- **Prioritize wraparound services and ensure a more holistic continuum of care** by investing in partnerships between Community-Based Organizations and Legal Services Providers.
- **Ensure greater transparency and coordination from city agencies** with legal service providers and community-based organizations (CBO) regarding city-wide immigration services, like the Asylum Application Help Center (AAHC).
- **Fund long-term representation alongside emergency rapid response services that focus on both new arrivals and long-time immigrant New Yorkers.** It is crucial that funding focuses on both lower touch/higher volume clinics as well as comprehensive intakes, so that immigrants are comprehensively screened for all forms of immigration relief, receive crucial social services, and do not fall through the cracks, which contributes to a state of constant crisis management.
- **Remove immigration legal services funding carve-outs** to ensure the City does not doubly punish and fail community members who need access to legal aid most in our complex immigration system.
- **End all transfers and communications between the DOC and ICE.** Expand City prohibitions to completely block the provision of information and transfer of people to ICE custody.
- **Pass Intro 214, a key bill in the [ICE Out! NYC package](#),** which seeks to prohibit NYC local agencies from conspiring with federal immigration agencies in the detention and deportation of immigrant communities. The bill would create accountability—a system for immigrants to take legal action to enforce their rights when our city agencies ignore or misinterpret our local laws.

Sincerely,

Immigrant ARC

Emerald Isle Immigration Center

ICARE Coalition

New York Immigration Coalition

Immigrant Defense Project

Vera Institute Of Justice

Safe Passage Project

New York Civil Liberties Union

Safe Horizon

New York Lawyers For The Public Interest

Caribbean Women's Health Association

Central American Legal Assistance

The Door's Legal Services Center

Bronxworks

Her Justice, Inc.

Afghans For A Better Tomorrow

Brooklyn Immigrant Community Support

Envision Freedom Fund

Acacia Center For Justice

Catholic Migration Services